FIFTEEN

On Nietzsche

1944–1945

Nietzsche's thought, like all Western thought since *Plato,* is metaphysics. In what initially appears to be an arbitrary move, we here presume the concept of the essence of metaphysics and leave its origin obscure. Metaphysics is the truth of beings as such and as a whole. Truth brings that which beings are (*essentia,* beingness)—that they are and how they are within the whole—into the "unconcealed" of the ἰδέα, *per-ceptio,* of pre-sentation, of conscious-ness. But this (the unconcealed) itself changes according to the Being of beings. Truth—as such unconcealment and with its essence of unsheltering—determines itself from the beings that it itself permits, and in each case solidifies the shape of its essence according the Being that is thereby determined. Truth is therefore historical in its own Being. Truth always demands a humanity through which it can be ordained, grounded, shared, and thus preserved. Truth and its preservation belong together

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Bracketed numbers in this chapter refer to the pagination of GA 50; the chapter opens at page 3.—Tr.

essentially, and in an historical way. In this way, a humanity always takes over the decision concerning the manner that is assigned to it of being amidst the truth of beings.[1] This manner of existing is essentially historical,[2] not because humanity progresses through the sequence of time, but because humanity remains transposed [4] into metaphysics, and the latter alone is capable of grounding an "epoch" insofar as it holds a humanity within a truth about beings as such and as a whole, and thereby "*seizes*" this humanity.

Beingness (what beings as such are) and the totality of beings (that and how beings are within the whole),[3] as well as the essential type of truth and the history of truth, and lastly the humanity that is transposed in order to preserve it, circumscribe the fivefold [*Fünffache*] in which the unified essence of metaphysics unfolds and takes hold again and again. Metaphysics as the truth of beings that belongs to Being[4] is never initially the view or judgment of a person, never a doctrinal system or "expression" of an age. It may also be these things, but always as a subsequent result and in the outwork. However, the manner in which someone who is called to safeguard truth in thought takes over the rare ordinance, grounding, communication, and preservation of truth in the advancing existential-ecstatic projection—and thus indicates and prepares a place for humanity within the history of truth—delimits what is called the *fundamental metaphysical position* of a thinker.[5]

If, therefore, the metaphysics that belongs to the history of Being itself is labeled with the name of a thinker (*Plato's* metaphysics, *Kant's* metaphysics), then this does not mean that in each case metaphysics is the achievement and property, or even the distinction, of these thinkers as figures of "cultural creation." The labeling now means that the thinkers are what they are insofar as the truth of Being has given itself over to them, demanding that Being—and within metaphysics that means the Being of beings—be spoken.

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1. Only counts for *modern* metaphysics.

2. In what connection with the historicity of truth, whose essence is originally the essence of fate?

3. Determine this distinction itself historically as a metaphysical one, and retain its essential-historical modification.

4. To which Being, which essence?

5. This section, as well as the first, is only comprehensible from the standpoint of inceptive thought and is only presentable through Beyng-historical thought. More precisely: The essence of metaphysics is first speakable in the event [*Ereignis*] of its being overcome. (The Sounding), cf. *Contributions to Philosophy.*

[5] With the work *The Dawn* (1881), light comes upon Nietzsche's metaphysical path. In the same year, "6000 feet above sea level, and much higher above all things human!" (vol. 12, p. 425), he gained insight into the "eternal return of the same." For almost a decade after this, his path stands in the brightest light of this experience. Zarathustra uses the phrase. As the teacher of the "eternal return," he teaches the "*Übermensch.*" It becomes clear and more certain that the fundamental character of beings is the "will to power," and that all interpretation of the world stems from it by being a type of valuation. European history unveils its basic trait of "nihilism" and leads to the necessity of "transvaluation of all previous values." This new valuation, based on the now decided and self-declared will to power, legislatively demands its own justification through a new "justice."

During this peak time of Nietzsche's, his thought wants to express the truth of beings as such and as a whole. One plan of execution succeeds another. One design after the other opens the structure of what the thinker wants to say. At one point the "eternal return" is the guiding term; at another "the will to power"; at another "the transvaluation of all values." Where one guiding term retreats, it reappears as a title for an epilogue to the whole, or as a subtitle. But everything rushes toward the "education of the higher human" (vol. 16, p. 414). They are the "*new true ones*" (vol. 14, p. 322) of a new truth.

One cannot misrepresent these plans and designs as the characteristics of something unaccomplished or unmastered. Their alternation does not attest to a first attempt and its insecurity. These sketches are not "programs" but rather the subsequent notation that preserves the silent but obvious paths that Nietzsche had to wander in the realm of the truth of beings as such.

[6] "The will to power," "nihilism," "the eternal return of the same," "the *Übermensch,*" and "justice" are the five basic terms of Nietzsche's metaphysics. "The will to power" is the term for the Being of beings as such, the *essentia* of beings. "Nihilism" is the name for the history of the truth of these beings that are determined in this way. "Eternal return of the same" is the way that beings as a whole are, the *existentia* of beings. "The *Übermensch*" describes that humanity which is demanded by this totality. "Justice"[6] is the essence of the truth of beings as will to power.[7] Each of these basic terms

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6. Justification—certainty of salvation, self-assurance—of the belongingness to beings as such; knowing oneself in it, about it, "truth" not as [. . .].

7. The essence of the truth of beings—according to the Being of beings—determined as the will

simultaneously names what the others say. The naming of each basic term is only exhausted if we think along what the others say with it.[8]

The present attempt can only be followed adequately through the basic experience of *Being and Time.* This experience consists in a perplexity that is constantly still growing, but that has perhaps reached clarity in a few places. It is the perplexity of the one occurrence: that, in the history of Western thinking, the Being of beings has indeed been thought, but that the truth of Being remains unthought; and that it is not only refused as a possible experience of thought but that, as metaphysics, [7] Western thinking veils the occurrence of this refusal, even if not knowingly.

The following interpretation of Nietzsche's metaphysics must therefore first attempt, from out of the aforementioned basic experience, to think Nietzsche's thought—which is no mere "philosophizing"—as metaphysics, i.e., through the fundamental traits of the history of metaphysics. The following attempt thus moves both toward a goal that is near, as well as toward the most distant one that thought can be burdened with.

Around 1881–1882, Nietzsche writes in his notebook: "The time is coming in which the fight for world domination will be fought—it will be fought in the name of *fundamental philosophical doctrines* [*Grundlehren*]" (vol. 12, no. 441, p. 207). At the time of writing, Nietzsche begins to know and speak about these "fundamental philosophical doctrines." It has not yet been considered that they develop in a peculiar sequence and manner. It therefore still remains unquestioned whether this sequence must have its basis in the essential unity of these "fundamental doctrines." The question of whether their manner of development sheds light on this essential unity demands its own reflection. The concealed unity of the "fundamental philosophical questions" determines the essential structure of Nietzsche's metaphysics. The completion of modernity unfolds its presumably long history on the foundation of this metaphysics and according to its meaning.

The immediate goal of the reflection attempted here is the recognition of the inner unity of those "fundamental philosophical doctrines." To this end, each of these "doctrines" must first be recognized and represented.

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to power, is not a valuation as a securing of existence; or each is the same. Why then is it not stated, i.e., differentiated? Why is "justice" as such not grasped? Securing of existence as the Being of beings—because will to power is also Being, thus truth of the will to power as justice. Truth "of" Beyng. Truth of the Being of beings; truth of beings.

8. But Nietzsche himself could no longer think the inner essential joining of what these five terms refer to. Why not? The limit of the completion of metaphysics; here, the veiling of the essence of metaphysics at its most complete stage; even a "system" no longer helps here—Hegel.

Their unifying ground, however, receives its determination from the essence of metaphysics as such. Only if the age that is beginning can come to stand on this ground without reservation and without veiling, only then can it lead the "fight for world domination" from that highest *awareness* that corresponds to the Being that undergirds and reigns throughout this age.

The fight for world domination and the unfolding of the [8] metaphysics that undergirds it bring to completion an epoch of the earth and of historical humanity. For here, outermost possibilities of world domination come to realization, as well as attempts on the part of humans to decide purely from themselves about their essence.

With this completion of the epoch of Western metaphysics, however, a basic historical position is determined in the distance, one which, *after* the decision of that fight concerning world domination, can no longer open or sustain the realm of a fight. The basic position in which the epoch of Western metaphysics completes itself will then be drawn into a completely different confrontation [*Streit*], one with a different essence. The confrontation is no longer the battle over mastery of beings. Nowadays this mastery ubiquitously interprets itself and steers itself "metaphysically"—but already without metaphysical mastery of essences. The confrontation is the setting-apart [*Aus-einander-setzung*] of the power of beings and the truth of Beyng [*Seyn*]. The most distant goal of the reflection attempted here is to prepare this confrontation [*Auseinandersetzung*].

The immediate goal—the reflection on the inner unity of Nietzsche's metaphysics as the completion of Western metaphysics—is subordinated to the most distant one. To be sure, in terms of the temporal sequence of attestable facts and conditions, the most distant goal lies infinitely far away from the current age. But that only means that it belongs to the historical distance of another history.

This most distant goal is also "closer" than what is usually close and the closest—provided that the historical human belongs to Beyng and its truth; provided that Beyng never first needs to overcome the proximity of beings; provided that Beyng is the only goal of essential thought, though one that has not yet been put in place; provided that such thought is inceptive, and in the other beginning must precede even literature [*Dichtung*] in the sense of poetry [*Poesie*].

"Presentation" and "interpretation" are worked *into* [9] each other in the text that follows, so that it does not immediately become clear what is taken from Nietzsche's words and what is appended. Every interpretation, naturally, must not only be able to glean the matter from the text, but must

also be able to add of itself from its own matter, without insisting on it. This contribution is what the layperson, measured by what he or she uninterpretively takes the content of the text to be, necessarily criticizes as imposition and arbitrariness. The "confrontation" with Nietzsche's metaphysics remains excluded.[9]

The Will to Power

[11] Anyone can experience in themselves what "will" means: willing is a striving for something. Everyone knows from daily experience what "power" is: the exertion of force [*Gewalt*]. What "will *to* power" means, then, is so clear that one prefers not to attach any special elaboration to the phrase. "Will to power" is obviously a striving for the possibility of exerting force, a striving for the possession of power. The "will to power" also expresses a "feeling of lack." The "will to" power is not yet itself the possession of power, i.e., not yet "power itself." This demand for something that is not yet counts as a sign of the "Romantic." Yet this will to power, as a drive toward grasping power, is at the same time also the pure greed of violence. Such interpretations of the "will to power," in which "Romanticism" and viciousness meet, deliver this basic phrase of Nietzsche's metaphysics to the common ear. Nietzsche thinks something different when he says "will to power."

Yet how are we to understand the "will to power" in Nietzsche's sense? Is not the "will" a mental capacity that psychological observation has long differentiated from "reason" and "feeling"? Nietzsche certainly also grasps the will to power "psychologically." But he does not delimit the essence of the will according to its usual [12] "psychology." Rather, conversely, he sets the essence and task of "psychology" according to the essence of the will to power. Nietzsche demands a psychology as "morphology and *theory of development of the will to power*" (*Beyond Good and Evil,* vol. 7, no. 23, p. 35).

What is the will to power? It is "the innermost essence of Being" (*The Will to Power,* vol. 16, no. 693, p. 156). That means: The will to power is the fundamental character of beings as such. The essence of the will to power can thus only be investigated and thought by looking to beings as such, i.e., metaphysically. The truth of this projection of beings onto Being, in the sense of the will to power, has a metaphysical character. This truth will not

9. On "confrontation," cf. the appended conclusion of the lecture-course from the summer semester of 1939, on Nietzsche's teaching of the will to power as knowledge [GA 47]. The level of confrontation is easier to exhibit, as an instructive lecture is also capable of this.

tolerate any grounding that relies on the manner and constitution of specific beings, since these indicated beings, after all, are only identifiable *as such*—i.e., as characterized by the will to power—if they have beforehand already been projected upon the fundamental character of the will to power as Being.

Does this projection remain solely within the whim of this thinker, then? So it appears. This appearance of arbitrariness also burdens the interpretation of what Nietzsche thinks when he speaks the phrase "will to power." But in the writings he himself published, Nietzsche hardly ever spoke of the "will to power"—an indication that he wanted to shelter for as long as possible this innermost aspect that he recognized of the truth about beings as such, and place it in the protection of a unique, simple saying [*Sagens*]. The will to power is mentioned, though without being distinguished as a basic term, in the second part of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883). The title of the section in which the first glimpse into the will to power is accomplished gives a hint toward the correct interpretation. In this section "On Self-Overcoming," Nietzsche says: "Where I found the living, there I found will to power; and even in the will of those who serve, I found the will to be a master." According to this, the will to power is the fundamental character [13] of "life." "Life," for Nietzsche, is just another word for Being. "'Being'—we have no other notion of this than as *'living.'*—How can something dead 'be'?" (*The Will to Power,* vol. 16, no. 582, p. 77). To will, however, is to want to be master. This will still exists in the will of him who serves, not insofar as he strives to free himself from the role of servant, but rather insofar as he is servant and attendant, and as such always still has something beneath him that he commands. But the servant also rules over the master insofar as he makes himself indispensable and thus forces the master closer to him and directs the master to him: being a servant is still a manner of the will to power. Willing would never be a will to be master if the will remained only a wishing and striving, instead of fundamentally and solely being a command.

But wherein lies the essence of the command? To command means to have the mastery of control *over* the possibilities, ways, manners, and means of active effect. What is ordered in the command is the accomplishment of this control. In the command, the one who commands obeys this control and thus obeys oneself. In this way, the one who commands is superior to oneself by still risking oneself. Are those who command thereby still obedient? (Being able to obey—being able to listen.) Commanding is self-overcoming and at times more difficult than obeying. Only the one that

cannot obey oneself must be commanded. The command-character of the will sheds a first light upon the essence of the will to power.

Power, however, is not the "goal" that the will initially goes after, as something outside of itself. The will does not strive for power, but already and only reigns in the essential domain of power. However: the will is not simply power, and power is not simply will. Rather: the essence of power is *will to* power, and the essence of the will is will *to power.* Only from this knowledge of the essence can Nietzsche say "power" in place of "will" and "will" instead of "power." But this never amounts to the equation [14] of will and power. Yet Nietzsche also never combines the two as if they were separate things first put together into a formation. Rather, the phrase "will to power" is intended to name precisely the indivisible simplicity of a joined and singular essence: the essence of power.

Power only powers [*machtet*] by being master over each achieved level of power. Power is only power as long as it remains an increase in power and commands itself the "more" in power. The mere pausing within the increase of power, the standing still at a level of power, already initiates powerlessness. The overpowering of itself belongs to the essence of power. This stems from power itself insofar as it is command and, as command, empowers itself to the overpowering of the power-level at hand. Thus power is constantly on its way "to" itself—yet not as a striving but as powering [*Machten*]—and not to another level of power, but to the empowering of its pure essence.

The counter-essence of the "will to power" is thus not the "ownership" of power that would be reached in contrast to the mere "striving for" power, but rather the "powerlessness to power" (*The Antichrist,* vol. 8, p. 233). But then "will to power" means nothing other than power to power. Certainly—except "power" and "power" do not here mean the same thing. Rather, "power to power" means: empowering to overpowering. Only the power to power understood in *this* way hits upon the complete essence of power. The essence of the will, as commanding, remains bound to this essence of power. However, insofar as commanding is an obeying of oneself, the will can be conceived, in correspondence to the essence of power, as a will to will. Here, too, "will" means different things: on the one hand, commanding, and on the other, control over the possibilities of acting.

But if power is now always power to power, and the will always will to will, are not will and power then the same thing? They are the same in the sense of the essential belonging-together [15] in the unity of *one* essence. They are not the same in the sense of the equivocal sameness of two

otherwise separated beings. There is just as little such a thing as a "will" in itself as there is "power" in itself. "Will" and "power," each posited for themselves, stiffen into pieces that are artificially broken off of the essence of the "will to power." Only the will to will is a will—namely to power in the sense of the power to power. The will to power is the essence of power.

This essence of power, never merely a degree of power, naturally remains the "goal" of willing, in the essential meaning that the will can only itself be will in the essence of power. For this reason, the will necessarily "needs" this "goal." That is why a fear of emptiness reigns in the essence of the will. Emptiness entails the extinguishing of the will in not-willing. Thus it is said of the will: "it would rather still will *nothingness* than *not* will" (*On the Genealogy of Morals,* vol. 7, third essay, no. 1, p. 399). "Willing nothingness" here means willing diminution, negation, annihilation, destruction. In such willing, power still secures its possibility of commanding. Thus the negation of the world is only a hidden will to power.

All that lives is will to power. "Having and wanting to have more, in one word *growth*—that is life itself" (*The Will to Power,* vol. 15, no. 125, p. 233). Every mere maintenance of life is already the demise of life. Power is the command to more power. But in order that the will to power, as overpowering, be able to surpass a level, this level must not only be reached but also retained and secured. The power that is reached can only be surpassed out of such security of power. The heightening of power is thus at the same time also a maintenance of power. Power can thus only empower itself to overpower by commanding *both* increase and maintenance. This includes the fact that power itself, and only power, sets the conditions of increase and of maintenance.

[16] Of what kind are these conditions that the will to power itself sets and are thus conditioned by it? Nietzsche answers this with a note from the last year of his wakeful thinking (1888): "The aspect of 'value' is the point of view of *maintenance-conditions, increase-conditions,* with regard to complex formations of relative life spans within becoming" (*The Will to Power,* vol. 16, no. 715, p. 171).

The conditions that the will to power sets for the empowering of its own essence are points of view. Such points become what they are through the "punctuation" of a peculiar seeing. This punctuating vision turns its "regard to complex formations of relative life spans within becoming." The vision that sets such points of view takes a view toward "becoming." For Nietzsche, this faded term "becoming" retains the fulfilled content that revealed itself as the essence of the will to power. Will to power is the

overpowering of power. "Becoming" does not mean the indeterminate flowing of a characterless change of any available circumstances. Yet "becoming" also does not mean "development to a goal." Becoming is the powering exceeding of each level of power. Becoming, in Nietzsche's language, means the movedness of the will to power that reigns from within itself as the fundamental character of beings.

For that reason, all being is "becoming." The wide view [*Ausblick*] toward "becoming" is the pre-view and vision into [*Vor- und Durchblick*] the powering of the will to power, with the single intention that the latter "be." This peering vision into the will to power, however, belongs to the latter itself. The will to power, as an empowering *to* overpowering, has the character of a pre-view and vision. Nietzsche says "perspectival." However, the "perspective" never remains a mere course of vision along which something is seen; rather, the peering vision sets its sights on "*maintenance-conditions, increase-conditions.*" As conditions, the "points of view" that are set in such "vision" [17] are of such a type that one must expect and reckon with them. They have the form of "numbers" and "measures"—and that means values. "Values" "are always *reducible* to that number- and measurement-scale of energy" (*The Will to Power,* vol. 16, no. 710, p. 169). Nietzsche always understands "energy" [*Kraft*] in the sense of power, i.e., as will to power.[10] Number, in its essence, is "perspectival form" (*The Will to Power,* vol. 16, no. 490, p. 17), and is thus bound to the "seeing" that belongs to the will to power, which according to its essence is a reckoning with values. "Value" possesses the character of the "point of view." Values are valid and "are" not "in themselves," in order occasionally to be sought out and brought into view, and thus subsequently also to become "points of view." Value is "essentially the point of view" of the powering-reckoning vision of the will to power (cf. *The Will to Power,* vol. 16, no. 715, p. 172).

Nietzsche speaks of the conditions of the will to power by calling them "*maintenance-conditions, increase-conditions.*" He intentionally does not say conditions of maintenance *and* increase, as if two different things were thereby brought together, where there really is only one. This one unified essence of the will to power regulates the complexity that inheres in it. Overpowering includes both that which is overcome as the level of power in each case, as well as that which overcomes. That which is to be overcome must pose a resistance and must therefore be something constant that holds and sustains itself. But that which overcomes must also have a firm place

10. Will to power as "force" [*Kraft*]; force, in a generalizing sense—life-force—"*energy*" [Energie].

and be stable, or else it could neither go beyond itself nor remain secure, without swaying, in the increase and its possibilities. Thus, conversely, all intentions toward maintenance are only for the sake of increase. Since the essence of the will to power has this complexity within itself, the conditions [18] of the will to power—i.e., the values—remain related to "complex formations." These forms of the will to power—e.g., science (knowledge), art, politics, and religion—Nietzsche also calls "forms of domination." He often not only designates the conditions for these forms of domination as values, but the forms themselves; for the latter create the paths and institutions and thus the conditions under which the world—which is essentially "chaos" and never an "organism"—orders itself as will to power. Thus, talk of "science" (knowledge, truth) and "art" being "values," initially perhaps strange, now becomes understandable. "How is the *value* objectively measured? Solely according to the amount of *increased* and *organized* power" (*The Will to Power,* vol. 16, no. 674, p. 137). Insofar as the will to power is the mutual interweaving of the maintenance and increase of power, each form of domination pervaded by the will to power remains steady as something that increases itself, but remains inconstant as something that maintains itself. Its inner constancy (duration) is thus essentially a relative one. This "relative duration" is appropriate to "life," to which "a flowing determination of power-boundaries [. . .] belongs," because it only is what it is "within becoming," i.e., within the will to power (*The Will to Power,* vol. 16, no. 492, p. 18). Since beings' character of becoming determines itself from the will to power, "all occurrence, all movement, all becoming [is] as an observation of relations of degree and energy" (*The Will to Power,* vol. 16, no. 552, p. 57). The "complex formations" of the will to power are of "relative life spans within becoming."

In this way, all beings are "perspectival" because they hold sway as will to power. It is "perspectivism" (i.e., the conception of beings as vision that sets points of view and reckons) "by virtue of which each center of energy—and not only the human—constructs the entire remaining world *from itself,* i.e., measures according to its energy, feels it, shapes it . . ." (*The Will to Power,* vol. 16, no. 636, p. 114). "If one wanted to get out of the world of perspectives, one would perish" (vol. 14, no. 15, p. 13).

[19] According to its innermost essence, the will to power is a perspectival reckoning with the conditions of its possibility, which it itself sets. The will to power is value-creating *in itself.* "The question of values is *more fundamental* than the question of certainty: the latter first obtains its se-

riousness under the condition of the value-question being answered" (*The Will to Power,* vol. 16, no. 588, p. 91).

"*Willing* in general amounts to wanting to become *stronger,* wanting to grow—and also wanting the *means to this*" (*The Will to Power,* vol. 16, no. 675, pp. 137–138). But the essential means are those "conditions" under which the will to power, in its essence, exists: the "values." "In all willing there is *valuing* . . ." (vol. 13, no. 395, p. 172). The will to power—and it alone—is the will that wants *values.* That is why it must finally expressly become and remain the source of all value-creation and that which dominates all estimation of values: the "principle of value-creation." As soon as the fundamental character of beings is recognized as such in the will to power, and the will to power thus dares to acknowledge itself, the thinking-through of beings as such in their truth—i.e., the truth of thinking the will to power—inescapably becomes a thinking according to values.

The metaphysics of the will to power—and only this—is rightly and necessarily a value-thinking. In reckoning with values and in valuing value-relations, the will to power reckons with itself. The self-consciousness of the will to power consists in value-thinking, whereas the name "consciousness" no longer means an indifferent "presenting," but is rather the powering and empowering calculation with itself. Value-thinking belongs essentially to the self-being of the will to power, to the manner in which it is a *subjectum* (something on its own that lies at the basis of all else). The will to power reveals itself as the subjectivity distinguished by value-thinking. As soon as beings as such are experienced in the sense of this subjectivity, i.e., as will to power, all [20] metaphysics—as the truth about beings as such—must be taken thoroughly for a value-thinking and value-creating. The metaphysics of the will to power interprets all previous basic metaphysical positions in light of the notion of value. All metaphysical engagement is a deciding about rankings of values.

Nihilism

[21] Plato, whose thought initiates metaphysics, conceives of beings as such, i.e., the Being of beings, as "idea." The ideas are the eternally one over against the many, the latter of which first appear in the ideas' light and in so appearing first *are.* As this one, the ideas are also the constant and true, in distinction to the changing and apparent. Conceived from the metaphysics of the will to power, the ideas must be thought as values, and the highest unities thought as the highest values. Plato himself illuminates the essence

of the "idea" by means of the *highest idea,* the idea of the good (ἀγαθόν). But "good," for the Greeks, means that which makes something suitable for something. The ideas, as Being, make beings suitable to being visible, thus to being present, and in Greek this means being beings. Since then—throughout all metaphysics—Being has the character of the "condition of possibility." Through the transcendental determination of Being as objectness (objectivity), Kant gave this character of Being a "subjective" interpretation. Nietzsche, from the subjectivity of the will to power, grasped these "conditions of possibility" as "values."

However, Plato's Greek conception of the "good" does not contain the notion of value. Plato's "ideas" are not values, for the Being of beings is not yet projected as will to power. Against this, however, and from *his own* basic metaphysical position, Nietzsche may well read the Platonic interpretation of beings, of the ideas, and thus of the supersensual, as "values." All philosophy since Plato is metaphysics in the way he projected it: Beings as such are conceived on the whole [22] from the side of the supersensual, and this is simultaneously recognized as the truly existing—be it the supersensual "God" as creator and the redeemer-God of Christianity, be it the moral law, be it the authority of "reason," be it "progress," be it the "happiness of the majority." The sensual, immediately present-at-hand is everywhere measured in terms of a "desirability," an "ideal." All metaphysics is Platonism. Christianity and the forms of its modern instantiations are "Platonism for the 'people'" (*Beyond Good and Evil,* vol. 7, preface, p. 5). Nietzsche thinks these desirabilities as the "highest values." Every metaphysics is a "system of valuations" or, as Nietzsche also says, "morality," "understood as the doctrine of mastery-relations under which the phenomenon of 'life' is created" (*Beyond Good and Evil,* vol. 7, no. 19, p. 31).

The interpretation of all metaphysics from the side of the notion of value is a "moral" interpretation.[11] However, Nietzsche does not perform this interpretation of metaphysics and its history as a historical-scholarly observation of the past, but rather as a historical decision concerning what is to come. If the notion of value becomes the guiding thread for historical reflection on metaphysics as the ground of Western history, then this primarily means that the will to power is the sole principle of valuation. Where the will to power dares to declare itself as the fundamental character of beings, everything must be assessed in terms of whether it increases the will to power or decreases and inhibits it. As the fundamental character, the will

11. Value-thinking—consequence of the "moral"—ἀγαθόν.

to power conditions all beings in their Being. As this highest condition of beings as such, it is the authoritative value. Just as metaphysics, until now, has not particularly known the will to power as the principle of valuation, so in the metaphysics of the will to power, the latter becomes the "principle of a new valuation." [23] Since, from the vantage point of the metaphysics of the will to power, all metaphysics is grasped "morally" as a "valuation," the metaphysics of the will to power in Nietzsche's sense becomes a valuation—a "new" one in the sense of a "transvaluation of all previous values."

The completed essence of nihilism consists in *this* transvaluation. But does the name "nihilism" not already state that, according to this doctrine, everything is empty and nothing, and every will and every work is futile? According to Nietzsche's conception, however, "nihilism" is neither a "doctrine" and "opinion" nor does it at all mean what the name would have one think: the dissolution of everything into mere nothingness.

Nietzsche could not fit his understanding of nihilism—which stems from the metaphysics of the will to power and essentially belongs to it—into the closed framework that probably hovered before his metaphysical-historical vision, and yet whose pure form we do not know and will never be able to piece together from the fragments that have been preserved. Nevertheless, Nietzsche thought through what "nihilism" means in all aspects and levels and types that were essential for him within the domain of his thinking, and set these thoughts down in individual writings of varying extent and level of emphasis. One document reads: "What does nihilism mean?—*That the highest values devalue themselves.* The goal is lacking; the answer to the question 'Why?' is lacking" (*The Will to Power,* vol. 15, no. 2, p. 145). Nihilism is the process of devaluing the previously highest values. The fall of these values is the collapse of the previous truth about beings as such in the whole. The process of devaluing the previously highest values is thus not an historical happening among many others, [24] but rather the fundamental occurrence of Western history that is carried and led by metaphysics. Insofar as metaphysics has experienced its peculiar theological emphasis through Christianity, the devaluing of the previously highest values must also be expressed through the phrase "God is dead." "God" here means the supersensual in general, which makes itself valid as the actual and only goal, as the "true" eternal world "beyond" this "mundane" one. When the sacred-Christian faith wears out and loses its worldly domination, the rule of this God does not also disappear. On the contrary, its shape masks itself and its claim hardens in being unrecognizable. The authority of "conscience," the "mastery of reason," the "God" of historical "progress," the

"social instinct," take the place of God's authority and of the Church. The fact that the previously highest values devalue themselves means that the ideals lose their power to shape history. But if the "death of God" and the fall of the highest values is nihilism, how can one claim that nihilism is nothing negative? What annihilates one more decisively into empty nothingness than death, indeed the death of God?

The devaluation of the previously highest values certainly belongs to nihilism as the fundamental occurrence of Western history, but it never exhausts its essence. The devaluation of the previously highest values initially leads to the world appearing valueless. The previous values are devalued, to be sure—but beings as a whole remain, and the dire need of setting up a truth about beings only increases. The indispensability of new values urges itself forward. The setting up of new values announces itself. A mediate condition is formed through which present world-history moves.[12] This mediate condition entails that at the same time [25] one hopes for the return of the previous world of values, indeed busies oneself with this—and yet one senses the presence of a new world of values, and acknowledges it even against one's will. This mediate condition—in which the historical peoples of the earth must decide their demise or new beginning—lasts as long as the appearance is maintained that the historical future can still be withdrawn through a mediating equalization between the old and the new values of the "catastrophe."

12. Hence the concept of *history*.